

Hillsborough Condemns Racism and White Supremacy

The Town of Hillsborough condemns racism and white supremacy. Our obligation to uphold people's rights to free speech and to ensure equal protection in the law for groups that espouse hateful views should not be construed as condoning or being complicit in those views. Below are statements from the Hillsborough Board of Commissioners, mayor and police chief as well as a statement about the town's values.

Statement from Hillsborough Board of Commissioners

Made Aug. 30, 2019, following a demonstration by the Ku Klux Klan and an immediate counter demonstration by community members on Aug. 24:

In recent years, the United States has seen an alarming rise in overt assertions of white supremacy and white nationalism. Even as overall crime rates are on the decline, hate crimes are rising. Black people have been targeted for being black, Jewish people for being Jewish — and, just weeks ago, 20 people in El Paso were murdered in a horrific shooting by someone explicitly targeting “Mexicans.”

Locally and in communities across the United States, immigrants, African Americans, and other religious and ethnic minority communities are concerned they may be targeted for who they are or appear to be.

One of the primary responsibilities of local government is public safety. Residents and visitors must feel safe in their homes, at school, and going about business and pleasure activities in our town. Local businesses require this sense of safety in order to take care of their employees and to welcome customers. Acts of racial intimidation on our town streets and public spaces and hateful discourse in online forums all threaten the well-being of our community.

The Town of Hillsborough has a mission and expressed list of values that iterate our purpose as a welcoming and inclusive town. We are obligated to provide services to and to respect the rights of all those here, regardless of personal beliefs.

While we will firmly uphold constitutional rights, let us be absolutely clear that we do not condone any activity which contributes to a climate of fear and intimidation. This includes the confederate flag rally of 2015, the firebombing of the Republican headquarters in 2016, the ongoing practice of waving confederate flags on our public streets, and the recent demonstration by members of the Ku Klux Klan. We stand opposed to assertions of supremacy and the propagation of hateful rhetoric. We stand in support of a multicultural, pluralistic, functioning democracy and a welcoming, inclusive community in our small town and across America.

As elected officials of the Town of Hillsborough, we call on our community to see each other's humanity; to strengthen the bonds and relationships that make this a wonderful place to live, work and play; and to repair the frayed edges of experiences that leave us vulnerable to fear and suspicion of each other. This is how we all thrive.

Tom Stevens, mayor

Jenn Weaver, mayor pro tem and commissioner

Mark Bell, commissioner

Kathleen Ferguson, commissioner

Matt Hughes, commissioner

Evelyn Lloyd, commissioner

Statement from Mayor Tom Stevens

Made Aug. 24, 2019, following demonstrations earlier that evening:

I am grateful and applaud the citizens of Hillsborough for turning out, for standing by each other, and for standing together to demonstrate to the world that the toxic, KKK, neo-confederate, white-supremacist message has no place in our community. None.

Earlier statement from the mayor

Made Aug. 9, 2019, following demonstrations of people holding Confederate flags:

[An Open Letter to the Hillsborough Community from the Mayor](#)

Statement from Police Chief Duane Hampton

Made Aug. 29, 2019:

In the wake of this past weekend's events and concerns for our community, I want to be clear that I — and the officers who serve this community — denounce in every way those who bring messages of hate and division to our community.

As police officers, we are caught between two worlds — between two competing interests. There is an expectation and desire that we be a part of the community and reflect the community's values, but at the same time we are supposed to be fair, impartial and neutral in how we enforce the law and deal with people. Police officers frequently have to deal with people who do horrible, unimaginable and evil acts. Yet, we do not have the luxury of allowing our feelings to show in how we interact with them. Fairness and impartiality are not something we can turn on and off or use situationally. We are fair and impartial all the time with everyone — or we are not.

I recognize that our efforts to remain impartial, especially when dealing with such a divisive group and message, may be interpreted by some as condoning or supporting the group or message in some way. This could not be further from the truth. The klan, their message of white supremacy, and their presence in our community fills us with disgust and is unwelcome. I am proud to serve a community like Hillsborough that does not tolerate groups which hate.

The klan's presence was not something we wanted to see here, but it was something we can learn from. Many of the questions that Saturday's event generated for us have been answered. We have reviewed our responses and identified areas that we can improve upon. As a result, we will be far better prepared to deal with future visits from this group or others like them.

Statement about the town's values

From values stated in the town's strategy map, in a past open letter from the Hillsborough Board of Commissioners and in a past State of the Town Address by the mayor:

The town values equity and fairness and ensuring Hillsborough is for everyone. We welcome all people to our town, including those of diverse faiths, races, cultures, sexual preferences, gender identities, immigration statuses, political persuasions, and abilities. As we seek to be an example of what is best and right in small-town America and of how to run town government, we strive to serve all people professionally and with high quality services. Hillsborough has weathered times of deep division in its history, and we seek to continue serving as a catalyst for change. We condemn actions of violence, intolerance and fear. We condemn bullying and intimidation of all sorts. Instead, we celebrate our community's diversity. We strive to maintain that diversity and to include all neighborhoods and areas of town as one. We desire one Hillsborough — a place where all people feel safe and at home, where all people are welcomed and welcoming, and where everyone has the opportunity to be engaged and included.